

ABSTRACT

The persistent wide disparity between actual and potential potato yield in Uganda is largely attributed to the low uptake of potato crop intensification innovation practices such as use of quality declared seed, soil fertility enhancements, and cropping strategies among smallholder farmers. Despite concerted efforts from diverse actors to promote the uptake of such practices, their uptake remains low. This study was anchored in cropping system intensification interventions and outcome framework and Social Network Theory (SNT) to expound the practical and theoretical implications of contemporary potato production practices used by smallholder farmers, actors' roles and their interactions. It also expounds farmers' attitudes towards potato crop intensification practices, and socioeconomic and institutional drivers for uptake of potato crop intensification innovations in the context of the Community Action Research Programme Plus (CARP+). A Mixed-Method approach was employed to collect qualitative data through FGDs, and key informant interviews while quantitative data was collected through a household survey. Thematic analysis using ATLAS.ti software revealed that home-saved potato seed source was most preferred due to low-cost and availability while research station potato seed source was perceived as expensive and only accessible by wealthier and registered farmers. There were also unenterprising perceptions towards key potato production practices such use of quality declared seed, intercropping systems and soil fertility management systems. This implied that farmers lacked basic knowledge on potato intensification innovations. SNA also revealed that some actors such as media remained in the network periphery (outskirts) while some actor domains lacked key actors leading to weak linkages. Finally, while household income and household size positively influenced uptake of potato intensification innovations, distance to agricultural market and frequency of extension visits significantly and negatively affected uptake. Based on these results, it was recommended that integrated agricultural extension services approach be adopted to ensure comprehensive training on use of quality seed, appropriate potato-based intercropping strategies and sustainable soil fertility management strategies. The study recommends for strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships that foster collaboration among diverse actors. Finally, the study recommended for need for more localized markets to reduce the distance farmers need to travel to drive of uptake innovations.

Keywords: Crop intensification, extension programs, farming practices, localized markets